

# **The Spirit's Gifts in the Confessions and in Corinth**

**Norman Nagel**

First we go to the Confessions, spending most of the time with the Large Catechism. Then we go to Corinth and listen to the Apostle as he takes up some related matters presented by the situation there. This puts us in the position of testing how the Confessions and the Apostle match up, and by this exercise we are then resourced to test out whatever we may hear being said of gifts. What is being said, what is not being said, what the grounding, what the sequence?

Every statement of gifts in the Confessions derives from the fact that God is the giver. As giver-God, He is gracious. To confess Him as such a God is faith. Faith and gracious God are correlatives. It is faith to look to such a God for every gift. Faith has nothing to speak of apart from what it is given. What it is given is everything and always more. It is impossible to add them up. The opposite of this is paying attention to ourselves. The opposite of faith is unbelief which refuses to receive every good from God. A god from whom gifts are not received is an idol. "It keeps account" (LC I, 22).

The foregoing comes from the explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism. Gracious God, nothing but gifts, faith: *extra nos*. What is to be said is the extolling of such a God. To extol such a God is to tell of His gifts. Faith has nothing to talk about but what it is given.

Those who receive His gifts, that is, the faithful, are the church. The church is the locatedness of the gifts being given out; that is where the means of grace are going on. For the means of grace going on in the church the Lord has given the Holy Ministry.

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For wherever the church is, there is the mandate to serve out (preach) the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. This authority is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, "When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men" (4:8). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right to elect and ordain ministers is necessarily existent (Tract. 67).

The article on the church in the Augsburg Confession comes after the article on the Holy Ministry, for the church is where the Gospel is preached purely and the holy Sacraments are given out according to the Gospel (AC 7). Here gifts are given in the way of the Gospel, that is, they cannot be measured; they are too manifold. The Large Catechism confesses:

I believe that there is upon earth a little holy gathering and communion under a single head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it has, brought in and incorporated by the hearing of God's Word and continuing to hear it (LC II, 51-52).

We shall listen particularly to the Large Catechism on our subject. For of the Large Catechism Dr. Luther said it contains what is vital, "what every Christian should know" (LC Introd. 2. FC Ep. Rule and Norm 5).

Here nothing is confessed of gifts independent of the means of grace (SA III, 8, 10: God will not deal with us except through His external Word and Sacraments). There is much extolling of the gifts thus given.

Without Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, no one can be a Christian (LC IV, 1). As the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are gifts given by God, so also is Holy Baptism (LC IV, 6). "What it benefits, gives and works" is all summed up in the fact that it saves. "To be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death and the devil, and to enter the kingdom of

Christ and live with Him forever" (LC IV, 23-25). "Where God's name is, there must also be life and salvation" (LC IV, 27).

Baptism is not a work which we do, but a treasure which God gives and faith grasps; just as the Lord Christ upon the cross is not a work, but a treasure comprehended and offered to us in the Word and received by faith (LC IV, 37).

Therefore, every Christian has in Baptism enough to learn and to exercise all his life long. There he always has enough to keep him going, firmly believing what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, all of Christ and the Holy Spirit and his gifts (LC IV, 41).

We have, therefore, no greater jewel in body and soul, for by it we are made holy and are saved. There is no other life, no other work on earth than can attain this (LC IV, 46).

A Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun at a particular point in time and to be exercised always (LC IV, 65).

So much on the gifts of Baptism in the Large Catechism where we read further:

Baptism comprehends the third sacrament formerly called Penance (LC IV, 74).

If you live in repentance, you walk in Baptism, which is no mere sign of such new life but in fact works, begins and furthers it, for in Baptism we are given grace, Spirit and strength to put down the old man so that the new comes forth and grows strong (LC IV, 75f.).

The third sacrament is confessed in the Small Catechism, and when there were those in Frankfurt who were scornful of Confession and Absolution, Luther wrote them a letter in which he extols all of the gifts that are given, great, inexpressible, and full of comfort (WA XXX<sup>3</sup>, 566, 20. Cf. *Concordia Journal*, October 1990).

The second Sacrament is also extolled for the gifts it gives. Christ's body and blood are "yours as your treasure and gift. Of this we can be quite certain that Christ's body and blood cannot be something that bears no fruit, amounts to nothing or works nothing" (LC V, 29). There

“our highest and best good” is given us, “a medicine that is nothing but salvific and comforting which helps you and gives life for both soul and body, a precious antidote against the poison in our systems” (LC V, 67-79). “Go joyfully to the sacrament and be enlivened, comforted and strengthened” (LC V, 73). There are two warnings given: looking to ourselves rather than to Christ's words and being pressured into faith or any good work (LC V, 57, 52, 63).

What the Large Catechism says of gifts we may take as core, basic and primary. What is said of gifts begins with God, and they are given in the way He has given for them to be given: Holy Ministry, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Holy Absolution. The means of grace and the Holy Ministry are location and instruments; by way of these God is ever the giver. He has two ways of dealing with us, the way of the Law and the way of the Gospel. The summary to the Third Article in the Large Catechism says:

Now you see that the Creed is an entirely different doctrine from the Ten Commandments. The latter do indeed teach us what we ought to do; the Creed tells us what God does and gives to us. The Ten Commandments, moreover, are written in the hearts of all men.

The Creed, however, no human cleverness can comprehend; only the Holy Spirit can teach it. No one is made a Christian by the Ten Commandments, for God's wrath and displeasure still remain on us because we cannot keep what God demands of us. But the Creed brings nothing but grace and makes us godly and pleasing to God. In knowing this we come to delight in and love all of God's commandments because we see here how altogether God gives himself to us with all that he has and is able to do, and so gives us help and direction for keeping the Ten Commandments. The Father gives us all created things (*alle Kreaturn, pater quidem omnibus suis creaturis*). Christ gives all his works; the Holy Spirit gives us all his gifts (*porro autem spiritus sanctus omnibus suis dotibus* LC II, 67-69 *dos, pignus, ἀρραβών, ἀπαρχήν*).

Here the Holy Spirit is confessed as the giver of gifts. This He does not in the way of the Law, but in the way of the Creed; that is the way of the Gospel. In the way of Gospel, then, the Ten Commandments themselves become a gift for the keeping of which the Gospel gives us help and prompting. This keeping is by way of and with the forgiveness of sins. Nothing is good that is not forgiven. Forgiveness is

the all-inclusive gift of the Holy Spirit. Gospel and forgiveness are spoken of as hendiadys, and their location is the church where the means of grace give them out.

We believe that in the Christian Church we have the forgiveness of sins which is bestowed through the Holy Sacraments and Absolution and in addition by all manner of comforting promises of the whole Gospel. This is the place from which everything concerning the sacraments is to be preached, and, in short, the whole Gospel and all offices (*Ämpter*) of the Christian church. All this is so needful that it must ever be going on without stop or gap (*ohn Unterlasz*). God's grace has indeed been won by Christ, and all gathered into the one church are made holy by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, yet we are still never without sin because of our flesh which pulls us back. Therefore everything in the church is ordered for the sake of our daily receiving undiluted forgiveness of sins through Word and Signs (sacraments). By these our conscience is comforted and revived as long as we live. Although we still at the same time have sins, it is the work of the Holy Spirit not to let them harm us because we are in the Christian church where there is undiluted forgiveness by which God forgives us and we forgive one another, bear one another up and help one another.

Outside of the Christian church, where there is no Gospel, there can be no forgiveness and no holiness. They have thrown themselves out and separated themselves who seek holiness by their own works and wish to earn something, scorning the way of the Gospel and the forgiveness of sins....

So the Holy Spirit has always to work on us through the Word and daily to give out to us forgiveness until that life when there will be no more forgiveness....

That says everything that is the office and work of the Holy Spirit. Here on earth He makes the beginning of holiness and increases it day by day by means of these two things: The Christian church and the forgiveness of sins (LC II, 54-59).

Whatever then is said of such gifts can only be said as integrally and derivatively related to the Holy Spirit, Gospel, forgiveness of sins, means of grace located in the church and the offices of the church.

This is the way, then, that Spiritual gifts are spoken of in the Large Catechism. Spiritual with a capital S; big or little S is always the test. While these are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, creaturely gifts are confessed as the gifts of the Father. "The Father gives us all created things, Christ gives all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts" (LC II, 69). "His gifts" is also said in the Small Catechism where they are set in contrast with natural or created gifts, "my own reason or strength." *Dona creata* is the Solid Declaration's term for these (VIII, 55) and the same distinction is in the Large Catechism II, 23.<sup>1</sup> These *dona creata* are individual, and they are not the same in each person, whereas the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to every Christian. The same gift, which creates faith, makes a Christian and brings him to completion when there will be no more need of forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

For creaturely gifts, we are then pointed to the First Article. Since it is the Creed's First Article, it is faith that is talking, and that makes all the difference. We have heard the Creed equated with the Gospel and contrasted with the Law, the Ten Commandments. We have heard also how Gospel/faith can receive the Ten Commandments as a gift and have good Gospel use of them. This use is characterized by unself-regarding eagerness and gladness (LC I, 9; II, 69 *Lust und Liebe*). Such Gospel/faith use of the Ten Commandments may be paralleled by Gospel/faith use of the creaturely gifts, the *dona creata*. One may not therefore begin with talk of these creaturely gifts. Regarded in isolation, they do not give Gospel. They may rather lay demands on us<sup>3</sup> or lead us to despair in their ambiguity and inadequacy, especially if we do measurements on them (LC I, 10). Regarding the Holy Spirit there can be no measurements (John 3:34).

When we heard in chapel a little while ago such wondrous music, we could recall Sasse's pointing to the ancient liturgy which speaks of the endless theologies with which the Lord is praised by the saints in heaven. But there are also those who at choir tryouts were rejected and had the disgrace of being tone deaf, of not being vouchsafed such privilege of high praise of God. It is not a gift that comes along with the birth of faith; we either have a good ear and voice box as creaturely gifts or we haven't. And one remembers Dorothy Sayer's

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<sup>1</sup>Theodosius Harnack, *Erklärung des kleinen Katechismus Dr. Martin Luthers* (Erlangen: Deichert, 1882), pp. 233f.

<sup>2</sup>Hoover and Leenerts get this wrong right at the start, but only on the basis of this mistake can they go on to say what they do. *Enlightened With His Gifts* (St. Louis: Lutheran Growth, 1979), p. 2. "Enlightened evokes Holy Baptism, φωτισμός. Justin, *Apology* II, 61, 12. *Fides et spiritualia dona* as hendiadys WA XL, 142, 22. LW 26, 73.

<sup>3</sup>K. R. Hunter, *Gifted for Growth* (Corunna, IN: Church Growth Analysis and Learning Center, c 1983), p. 3. "All point to the demand for follow through."

words with regard to the acting of her miracle plays. She said that the first thing she looked for was actors and musicians who were competent actors and musicians, and whether they were Christians or not was a secondary consideration. And so the choirmaster who annihilates the man for his wrong entry is not calling the man's faith into question but his creaturely gift and his use of it.

The Confessions, then, have much to say of the gifts given by the Holy Spirit; these are gifts given to every Christian, gifts that create a Christian, gifts located and given out by the means of grace which are the location of the church. These are Spiritual gifts with a big S. What is of the Holy Spirit is not subject to measurement. His gifts run together; they are not separable into individual items. The gift of the Holy Spirit (subjective genitive) is first the forgiveness of sins (LC II, 62) and with that the righteousness of Christ by which we are holy before God (LC II, 39). These are eternal gifts in contrast with the transitory ones, the *dona creata* (SD VIII, 55). They are heavenly gifts. They are surely every Christian's as they are bestowed by the Holy Spirit with the means of grace, "for and according to the promise that the Word of God preached and heard is the office and work (*Amt und Werk*) of the Holy Spirit through which He is vigorously at work in our hearts," as it says in the Solid Declaration (SD II, 56) where this follows the warning against going by what we can observe with our senses or feelings (SD II, 6f., 46).

The actual sequence is Third Article, Second Article, First Article. The Holy Spirit with the means of grace bestows the salvation gifts won for us by Christ. These gifts are received in faith. The life of faith is living begiftedly, and so on then through the First Article and all its *dona creata*.

When the Holy Spirit has created faith by bestowing the gifts of the Second Article, that faith then receives the things of the First Article, in the way of faith, that is, as gifts. This faith, enlivened by the Spirit, has Him, then, to thank for this and can call First Article things gifts received in the way of faith; that is the working of the Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, Spiritual gifts. When these are received and used as gifts from God, the work of the Spirit is manifested (1 Cor. 12:7). As First Article gifts these are unique to each Christian; the gifts of the Third and Second Article are given to every Christian. The Spirit works faith all the way through the Second Article—"Jesus is Lord"—and all the way through the First Article; and here the varieties of gifts and the sequence is: same Spirit, same Lord, same God. The varieties of gifts are lived as gifts by the enlivening of the Holy Spirit, by His energizing (His special verb, ἐνέργειν, 1 Cor. 12:11). This runs through all that we are in the First Article. Romans 12

speaks of our bodies and all that is there, put into the worship and service of God, is then “living sacrifice,” and its particulars are unique to each one. My toes may not be as lovely as some I have seen, but I know, by the faith worked by the Spirit, who has given me these particular toes, and by the faith worked by the Spirit I confess this in the First Article and its explanation in the Small Catechism. Toes energized into the living sacrifice are then such toes as I thank the Spirit for.

And so now to 1 Corinthians 12:1: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed.” This passage does not appear in the Confessions, and yet it is the text or one of the four that is a *sedes doctrinae* and shibboleth of those who speak so much of spiritual gifts nowadays, a vogue that has grown strong since roughly 1970. So for less than twenty years has this been so urged. One of our graduate students [now a member of our seminary faculty], Glenn Nielsen, reported the listings under “Gifts, spiritual” in the *Christian Periodical Index*. In the five years 1956-1960 there was one; 1961-65, three; 1966-70, two; 1971-75, nineteen; and in the four years, 1976-79, twenty. C. Peter Wagner, who as a principal source ought to know, observes that if you have read one you have read them all, or words to that effect. He said, “In preparation for writing, I read 48 books on spiritual gifts....By the time I passed twenty books, I began to suspect that there is much repetition in current literature. After 48 I was sure of it.”<sup>4</sup> The fourteen years since he said that have only provided evidence confirming his observation. Thus warned, we shall concentrate rather on questions of method, procedure, sequence, and grounding. How do these go in the Confessions, and now how do these go in Corinth? While 1 Corinthians 12:1 is not quoted in the Confessions, 1 Corinthians 12:3 is.

“No one can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” All gifts of the Holy Spirit are only gifts, and only His, therefore to be referenced in no way to known potentialities (SD II, 25f.).

1 Corinthians 12:22-23 (weaker parts/greater honor) is quoted for its Scriptural application in the explanation of the Eighth Commandment in the Large Catechism. “Thus in our relations with one another, we should veil whatever blemishes and infirmities we find in our neighbor.” “We should prevent everything that tends to his disgrace” (LC I, 288). We have observed the disgrace of the tone deaf. And who will not be disgraced if we start adding up each one’s abilities? If not me, at least you. If you want to try this, Hunter has

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<sup>4</sup>*Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Growth* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1974), p. 27.

provided a list of twenty-seven items. It should not be difficult to come up with twenty-eight. The trouble is, then, that with these lists of so-called spiritual gifts, pastors seem to score unfairly heavily. This is not surprising since a number of the passages speak of the Holy Ministry.<sup>5</sup> But not to worry, “Every member a minister.” This slogan is also dealt with by the Apostle. There is a clerical arrogance which suggests that you are only worth something in the church when you are playing little pastor. Diminution of the Doctrine of Vocation and the Doctrine of the Holy Ministry does not surprise us when we observe that promoters of these sorts of spiritual gifts are also protagonists for a comparable church growth promotion with lists, demands, and scores. Such protagonists do not fit Scripture to Aristotle, as we have been taught to recognize, but to their marketing and management and psychological theory. There is a remarkable lack of careful exegetical work. One even hears scorn for the languages, which according to Luther you love only as much as you love the Gospel. So much, then, for 1 Corinthians 12 in the Confessions.

We should perhaps note that the word “gifts” does not appear in 1 Corinthians 12:1. It is an interpretative addition to the text. The text has περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, genitive plural of the masculine of the neuter, πνευματικοί or πνευματικά. If masculine, then: “Now concerning those who are calling themselves the spiritual ones.” Phillips translates the neuter “spiritual matters.” Most others put in “gifts” which does no harm in the Authorized Version where the insertion is acknowledged as customarily with the italics.

1 Corinthians 2:13 has a masculine or neuter πνευματικοῖς. Πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συνκρίνοντες. Συνκρίνω is in contrast with διακρίνω, which is telling things apart, facing things up against each other as alternatives, as we have in telling apart ordinary bread from the bread by which we are given the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29). Συνκρίνω tells of putting things together, lays them side by side and so making them clear, explaining them, testing how they fit together. So here συνκρίνοντες puts spiritual things alongside spiritual things to make them clear by how they go together or by how they fail to go together. “Comparing spiritual things with spiritual” is the translation of the Authorized Version. There was a lot of talk about πνευματικά in the congregation. The resource for doing this συνκρίνοντες, the comparison, are the apostolic words taught by the Spirit. They will clarify what is being said or claimed of spiritual things, πνευματικά, and so what comes from the spirit of the world and what comes from

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<sup>5</sup>For Ephesians 4:12 see H. Haman, *Concordia Journal* 14:1 (January 1988): 42-49.

the Holy Spirit (v. 12). The same procedure for testing someone who claims to be a πνευματικός is given in 1 Corinthians 14:37. “If any one thinks he is a prophet, or a spiritual [πνευματικός], he should acknowledge that what I am saying is a mandate of the Lord.” The opposite of this is to scorn such comparison and to insist on being self-authenticating, “is himself to be judged by no one” (1 Cor. 2:15). Such a one is acting as if he were the Lord God Himself; he refuses the testing comparison. If we take πνευματικοῖς as masculine in 1 Corinthians 2:13 and not as neuter (comparing spiritual things with Spiritual things—if the terms were identical there would be no comparison), but as masculine as in 1 Corinthians 14:37, then we have “comparing those who call themselves spiritual ones with the spiritual things/Spiritual things.” The latter is the test being worked by the Apostle. “The things of the Spirit, the one who is God’s Spirit” (v. 14). The one who is God’s Spirit is known by the words He has given the Apostle. He begins with this little s and leads them to the big S. By these we know what is Spiritual in comparison with anything else that may be called spiritual.

Paul takes up the slogan words that were being thrown around in the congregation, πνευματικός and ψυχικός, and diagnoses how they are operating. This he does at first ironically as he does also with the slogan words “wisdom” and “knowledge,” and then proceeds to supply them with Christ content. His clincher here is “but we have the mind of Christ.” “Mind” (*νοῦς*) is supplied by the immediately preceding quotation (Is. 40:13) in this passage which deals with the Holy Spirit, and so mind of Christ is Spirit of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:11). As the Apostle goes through the list supplied by the situation in the church in Corinth, his procedure is to clarify by knowing how each matter fits with Christ or does not fit with Christ (*συνκρίνοντες*), and so whether it confesses, extols, and centers attention on Him, Christ crucified. And He, the burden of the apostolic words, taught the Apostle by the Spirit. Or are there those who are drawing attention to themselves, claiming something others do not have, and so putting themselves on a higher level than other members of the church? Such are the πνευματικοῖς who boast of their πνευματικά. Chapter 2 has, then, this progression: The Apostle engages the talk of wisdom and knowledge (here called “lofty,” later “puffs up”). He then declares that he knows “nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He admits how lamentably unfit and ill-quipped he is for proclaiming this. What gifts he lacks he acknowledges in the protagonists of “wisdom.” These are impressive and appropriate when they run with that sort of wisdom, just as later he points out how impressive speaking in tongues is to those outside the church where such speaking in tongues is regarded as sure

evidence of a god strike. Wisdom that is worthy of the name is only that which God gives. This is done by the Spirit, the Spirit of God, not the spirit of the world. Only by Him do we know what has been bestowed on us by God (χαρίσθεντα, v. 12, big Gospel word run by χάρις. Cf. Ap XVIII, 74). This is imparted by the apostolic words taught the Apostle by the Spirit. These, then, are the criteria for clarifying claims, for πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συνκρίνοντες by “comparing spiritual things with Spiritual things.” The result is announced in 3:1: “But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men [πνευματινοῖς], but as men of the flesh [σάρκικοι].” Σάρκινος is another term from the psychology and religion of those days. Πνευματικός, ψυχικός, and σάρκινος indicate observable, inventoryable, quantifiable levels of value and ability in an individual.<sup>6</sup> These had been imposed on what Paul had preached to them (λαλήσαι, aorist infinitive of λαλεῖν, something no woman may do in the church—another case of the intrusion of some Corinthian psychology or social theory). It is the way of scholastic theology to have your pattern and then to put things into it. We have been trained in our study of the Confessions to spot how this can be done in scholasticism with Aristotle; resourced with that skill we ought to be able, then, to recognize when similar things are going on nowadays and track down where they come from.

The result of what Paul says of comparing spiritual things with spiritual is announced in 1 Corinthians 3:1. Those calling themselves πνευματικοί are disqualified from using such a term of themselves (cf. Gal. 6:1). They still need the basics. First things first. Milk. Basic is Jesus Christ, no other foundation. Anything that deflects from Him has to go. Only what's His stands. Any rubbish, what is not of Him, will be burnt away. On this foundation “You are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you.” If any one thinks he has wisdom, let him not look to that. “So let no one boast of men [in what's there in men, v. 3: κατὰ ὄνθρωπον]. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are God's” (1 Cor. 3).

Such overflowing, all-embracing, immeasurable bounty lies beyond the reach of any of our measurements. Putting measurements on it is the way of the Law, the way of sizes, limits, and lists of human observation and measurement. “Keeping account” was the Large Catechism's characterizing phrase.

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<sup>6</sup>See Montanism in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 419.

This excursion to Corinth has shown the Apostle's pastoral procedure. He takes up the problem as stated and diagnoses it according to Christ, His Spirit, His Spirit's words given to the apostle to speak. He pours in the Gospel, and that water washes through pushing other stuff aside. To fasten on any item and expound it as dry takes it out of what is being delivered in the Epistle. There were those prone to do this with gifts that they identified in themselves. The Apostle wets them with the Gospel, and so they can't be going on talking about them that way any more. So back to 1 Corinthians 12:1 and those passages which speak or do not speak of spiritual gifts. And so also back to the Confessions and their way of confessing gifts, resourced with the criterion of the Apostle's way.

First gifts first, those which create a Christian, every Christian, enliven, sustain and bring to completion, as they are confessed in the Third Article. What is confessed there is true of every Christian.

Second gifts second. There can be no talk of these gifts unless first gifts have been confessed first. Otherwise we shall end up with Corinthian problems. These are gifts which may be given to one Christian and not another: creaturely gifts, First Article gifts, *dona creata*. They are confessed in the Confessions in second and third place and so in the swing of the Gospel. The danger is recognized of them falling out of the way of the Gospel, deflecting from Christ, calling attention to oneself, measuring and finding what puts one higher or lower than other Christians (LC I, 10. 2 Cor. 10:12. "They measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding."). They boast of their strength, the Apostle of his weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:5 & 9 are quoted in Apology XII, 160. While there may only be evidence of weakness, the Holy Spirit and His gifts are not thereby proven not to be given (SD II, 47). "They are often covered and occur in great weakness" (SD II, 56). Indeed, it is for those conscious only of weakness for whom Christ particularly instituted the most blessed Sacrament and says, "Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Those who are well are in no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matt. 9:12). "God's strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9; SD VII, 70).

Indeed anything that looks frightfully holy the Confessions regard with suspicion (Ap. XII, 63; our works or our love. XVI, II). Recognition of weaknesses is openness to our Lord's gifts and their having their way with us as gifts, His, and so we live begiftedly, that is faithfully, and when this is the way with the first gifts we are resourced to live each instance of our individual and creaturely gifts giftingly/faithfully (LC II, 23). We may recall what Dr. Luther says in the *Freedom of a*

*Christian.* A Christian does not live inside himself. He lives in Christ by faith and his neighbor by love. Pointing up what is in me is, therefore, no kind of Christian talk. This location of the Christian life outside ourselves is not left floating by the Confessions. It is located in one's calling and instructed by the Ten Commandments.

Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant (SC V, 20).

First one's calling, then individual gifts, and these used faithfully.

"If they continue in faith." Here the work and tasks of the estate of marriage done without faith are not praised. Before everything else he [the Apostle] would have them [mothers] have and believe God's Word for by this faith, as he says of everybody, they receive forgiveness of sins and are reconciled with God. Having said that he calls attention to their wifely office and calling (*Amt und Beruf*). So it is with all Christians; good works are to flow from faith, and so each one in his calling is to do what is useful to his neighbor. Just as all such good works are pleasing to God so also such works are pleasing to God which a faithful wife does in her calling (Ap. XXIII, 32).

This is said in the context of those who puff themselves up because of their celibacy. Celibacy and virginity may be special gifts as also being an architect, military strategist, farmer, orator, or a businessman. All such are to be praised in using their gifts faithfully. Such individual gifts are not everybody's, nor are they equationable (Ap. XXIII, 39, 69). Following Christ is done by each in his calling. All do not have the same calling. One is called to be a ruler, a second to be a father of a family, a third to be a preacher....Callings are personal, just as occupations vary with times and persons (Ap. XXVII, 49. German, Latin).

Each one is to serve faithfully with his own gift and therein know that for Christ's sake he has forgiveness of sins through faith and is accounted righteous before God (Ap. XXIII, 39).

This, Paul's dealing with individual gifts, his customary paranesis, at point 3 and the Table of Duties, all say the same thing.

So if we read now 1 Corinthians 12, where the apostle deals with things that are being called "spiritual," we may compare (συνκρίνοντες)

what is said there with what is said in the Confessions, to see if there is some gift lacking (1 Cor. 1:7) or whether they say the same things, deriving it from the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:10. διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Of that διά Schlatter remarks *mit begründender Kraft.*).<sup>7</sup>

When we have done that we may go on to do the same with what we hear nowadays being said of “spiritual gifts.” What is being said, what is not being said, what the grounding, and what the sequence?

Where the life of faith is going on, the S is big. There there is freedom, freedom from the whip of the Law's demands, measurements, sizes, and scores. There there is *Lust und Liebe*, “greatest gladness” and unself-regarding joy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*Paulus der Bote Jesu* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1969), p. 66.

<sup>8</sup>2 Cor. 3:17. LC II, 69. W. Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), p. 69, n. 14. For joy see the *Concordance to the Book of Concord* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1989), p. 285. See also Sermon on the Sum of the Christian Life (LW 51: 259-287). Walther's letter to his daughter Magdalene in R. Suelflow, *Selected Letters* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), p. 49. H. Sasse, “On the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *We Confess the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), pp. 17-39.



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